

1. (Previously Presented) An image input apparatus comprising:
reading means for reading an encryption key stored in an external source;
storage means for storing said encryption key to execute an encryption
process;
encryption means for encrypting digital information by using said
encryption key stored in the storage means;
output means for outputting the encrypted digital information; and
erasing means for erasing said encryption key stored in said storage means
after encrypting the digital information by said encryption means and before outputting the
encrypted digital information by said output means.

2. (Original) An image input apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said
encryption means encrypts the digital information which has undergone a high-efficiency
coding operation.

3. (Original) An image input apparatus according to claim 1, further
comprising image pick-up means for optically picking up an image of a subject and for
generating an image signal from the picked-up image.

4. and 5. (Canceled)

6. (Original) An image input apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said encryption key comprises an encryption key based on a common key cryptosystem.

7. (Original) An image input apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said encryption key comprises an encryption key based on a public key cryptosystem.

8. and 9. (Canceled)

E¹

10. (Previously Presented) An image input method comprising the steps of:
reading an encryption key stored in an external source;
storing said encryption key in a storage means to execute an encryption

process;

encrypting digital information by using said encryption key stored in the
storage means;

outputting the encrypted digital information; and

erasing said stored encryption key after encrypting the digital information by
the encrypting step and before outputting the encrypted digital information by the
outputting step.

11. (Original) An image input method according to claim 10, wherein the
digital information which has undergone a high-efficiency coding operation is encrypted.

12. (Previously Presented) An image input method according to claim 10, wherein an image signal is generated from an optically picked up image of a subject which is converted into the digital information.

13. (Original) An image input method according to claim 10, wherein said encryption key comprises an encryption key based on one of a common key cryptosystem and a public key cryptosystem.

E¹
14. (Previously Presented) An encryption processing program stored in a computer-readable medium, comprising:

a step of reading an encryption key stored in an external source;

a step of storing said encryption key in a storage means to execute an encryption process;

a step of encrypting digital information by using said encryption key stored in the storage means;

a step of outputting the encrypted digital information; and

a step of erasing the stored encryption key after the step of encrypting the digital information and before the step of outputting said encrypted digital information.

15. to 17. (Canceled)

18. (Previously Presented) An image input apparatus comprising:

information encryption means for encrypting digital information by using an internal encryption key;

obtaining means for obtaining an external encryption key stored in an external source;

storage means for storing said external encryption key to execute a key encryption process;

key encryption means for encrypting said internal encryption key by using said external encryption key stored in said storage means;

output means for outputting the encrypted digital information and the encrypted internal encryption key; and

erasing means for erasing said external encryption key stored in said storage means after encrypting said internal encryption key by said key encryption means and before outputting said encrypted digital information and the encrypted internal encryption key by said output means.

19. (Original) An image input apparatus according to claim 18, wherein said internal encryption key comprises an encryption key based on a common key cryptosystem, and said external encryption key comprises an encryption key based on a public key cryptosystem.

20. (Previously Presented) An image input method for an image input apparatus comprising the steps of:

encrypting digital information by using an internal encryption key;
obtaining an external encryption key stored in an external source;
storing said external encryption key in a storage means to execute a key
encryption process;

key encrypting said internal encryption key by using said external
encryption key stored in said storage means;

outputting the encrypted digital information and the encrypted internal
encryption key; and

erasing the stored external encryption key after encrypting the internal
encryption key by the key encrypting step and before outputting the encrypted digital
information and the encrypted internal encryption key by the outputting step.

21. (Canceled)

22. (Previously Presented) An encryption processing program stored in a
computer-readable medium, comprising the steps of:

a step of encrypting digital information by using an internal encryption key;
a step of obtaining an external encryption key stored in an external source;
a step of storing said external encryption key in a storage means to execute a
key encryption process;

a step of key encrypting said internal encryption key by using said external
encryption key stored in said storage means;

E! a step of outputting the encrypted digital information and the encrypted internal encryption key; and

a step of erasing the stored external encryption key after encrypting the internal encryption key by the key encrypting step and before outputting the encrypted digital information and the encrypted internal encryption key by the outputting step.
